

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application, in light of the enclosed remarks, is respectfully requested.

I Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 2, 7-9, 13, 14, and 25-41 are pending in the application.

II Status of the Specification

The Examiner objected to the Abstract. Applicants have corrected the Abstract and a replacement is attached herewith as page A-1. The Abstract has been replaced pursuant to the Examiner's suggestion. No new matter has been added.

III Double Patenting

Claims 31 and 41 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as unpatentable over claims 1-45 of U.S. Patent No. 6,186,970 ("the '970 patent"). Applicants respectfully traverse the double patenting rejection since the claimed subject matter in the present application is patentably distinct from the '970 patent. Claims 31 and 41 depend from claim 1 and the elements of claim 1 are incorporated in the claims depending from it. Claim 1 claims a portion to support regions of the wearer's body which is patentably distinct from the support portions of the '970 patent. For example, claim 1 of the present invention provides support for different portions of a user's back and buttocks.

Claims of the '970 patent and claims 31 and 41 are directed to supporting the musculus gastrocnemius and the musculus soleus. However, the nature and positioning of the straining forces as claimed in claims 31 and 41 are patentably distinct from the straining forces applied by the garment claimed in the '970 patent. Also, the straining portions supporting the lower leg interact differently with the lower body portions of the garments in each invention. Thus, some of the distinctiveness of the claims of the present invention stem from the lower body supporting portions, the positioning of the lower leg supporting portions and the interaction of the lower body and lower leg portions.

In light of the reasons set forth herein, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections for double patenting and urge allowance of the claims.

IV Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 2, 3, 13, 27, 29, and 38-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Japanese Patent Application 06-12412 to Atelier Lipstick K.K. ("JP '412"). The Examiner submits that the reference discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention. Applicants note a typographical error and assume that the rejection of claim 3 is a typographical error, since claim 3 was not pending at the time of examination, and that the Examiner rejected claim 1.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Applicants are assuming that the Examiner contends that JP '412's hip covering region 4 corresponds to the strong straining portion of claim 1. Applicants respectfully disagree. JP '412 does not disclose that hip covering region 4 has a strong straining force. JP '412 discloses reference 4 as either "buttock covering regions" or "hip covering regions" (emphasis added). Additionally, JP '412 discloses that reference 5 is "stretchable fabric

patches” and references 6 and 7 are “power net patches”. “Power net patches” corresponds to the portion with a strong straining force and the portion 4 and 5 corresponds to the portion with a weak, or no, straining force. JP ‘412 makes a distinction between regular fabric that acts to just cover the anatomy of a user, stretchable fabric and the fabric that has the greatest elastic force. Given the above, JP ‘412’s hip covering regions 4 are fabric, do not have great elastic force, and cannot exert greater elastic force. Hip covering regions 4 are in contrast to, and cannot anticipate, “a strong straining portion (A)” as claimed in claim 1.

Further, the “power net patches” of JP ‘412 are not aligned in the same location as recited in the claims and do not support the same portions of the anatomy in the same manner. Claim 1 recites that portion (A) connects at “any region from os sacrum to vertebrae lumbalis of the wearer’s body.” Figure 2 of JP ‘412 illustrates that power net patch 6 does not connect near the vertebrae lumbalis or os sacrum. Furthermore, Figure 2 and claim 1 of JP ‘412 disclose that power net patches 6 “bring up lower parts of the buttocks.” In contrast, portion (A) “covers a region ... through tops of bulges of the buttocks ... to at least the vicinity of trochanter major”, thus portion (A) does not extend below the buttocks.

Regarding claims 2, 13, 27, 29, and 38-40, they depend from claim 1 and are allowable based at least on the dependency to the independent claim.

Further, regarding claims 2 and 13, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner’s reading of JP ‘412. Power net patches 6 do not connect “at a position on the garment corresponding to musculus rectus abdominis in hypogastric region”. JP ‘412 only illustrates a side and rear view of the garment. JP ‘412 does not illustrate the front of the garment which would correspond to the location of the musculus rectus abdominis and the JP ‘412 does not suggest or disclose a strong

Further, Applicants disagree with the Examiner's characterization of WO '987 regarding claims 7-9. Applicants assume that the Examiner contends that abdominal cloth portion 31 of WO '987 reads on strong straining portion (F) in claims 7-9. However, WO '987 states the cloth portion 31 is "non-stretchable cloth material." In contrast, portion (F) is defined as a "strong straining portion (F) for pressing abdomen and ... wherein: the portion (F) has a main stretch direction in the longitudinal direction of the garment". Thus, portion (F) stretches and further, is a strong stretching portion. Non-stretchable abdominal cloth portion 31 does not anticipate strong straining portion (F).

Furthermore, regarding claims 25 and 26, Applicants assume that the Examiner contends that reinforcing cloth portions 32 and correcting cloth portions 33 of WO '987 anticipate strong straining portion (C). Applicants respectfully disagree, the strong straining portion (C) exceeds "the sides of the wearer to the back side". In contrast, reinforcing cloth portion 32 does not exceed the sides of the wearer to the back side.

Additionally, the "right and left parts of the portion (C) are connected at a position on the garment corresponding to musculus rectus abdominis in hypogastric region". In contrast, reinforcing cloth portions 32 and correcting cloth portions 33 are not connected to each other and do not terminate "at a position on the garment corresponding to musculus rectus abdominis in hypogastric region" as required in the claims. WO '987 discloses non-stretchable abdominal cloth portion 31 occupying the claimed region and, as above, non-stretchable abdominal cloth portion 31 cannot anticipate a strong straining portion. Thus, the combination of non-stretchable abdominal cloth portion 31, reinforcing cloth portions 32, and correcting cloth portions 33 does not teach or suggest the claimed invention.

